

The Role of the PSAs

Policing for Prevention Handbook



Mayor Anthony A. Williams
Charles H. Ramsey • Chief of Police

Mission Statement

The mission of the Metropolitan Police Department
is to prevent crime and the fear of crime,
as we work with others
to build safe and healthy neighborhoods
throughout the District of Columbia.

The Role of the PSAs

P o l i c i n g f o r P r e v e n t i o n H a n d b o o k



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A Note to the Reader

Policing for Prevention is not a new name, but it is a new strategy. It involves three approaches necessary to create lasting change in our neighborhoods—focused law enforcement, neighborhood partnerships, and systemic prevention.

This Policing for Prevention handbook, *The Role of the PSAs*, is one in a series of “how-to” guides for implementing the new policing strategy. The *Partnerships for Problem Solving* workbook was the first. It focuses on building the essential problem-solving collaboration between police, community, and other agencies. The *PSA Plan Forms and Instructions* handbook being released simultaneously provides detailed instructions on how to work with new forms that help facilitate and coordinate problem solving activities.

This handbook takes a step back and provides the context for problem-solving and PSA plans. And it focuses on the role of PSA managers and their teams in implementing the Policing for Prevention strategy. Though it is geared toward PSA teams, it will help members in other assignments, including other district operational and Special Services units, as well as Corporate Support and other non-Operational Services units, think about what they can do to support the implementation of Policing for Prevention Department-wide.

Foreword

By Mayor Anthony A. Williams

Safe and healthy neighborhoods are a top priority of residents of the District of Columbia. This was the resounding message from more than 3,000 people who attended the Citizen Summit in November of 1999. But building safe and healthy neighborhoods is not an easy task, nor is it the responsibility of any one agency or organization. It requires that government agencies work with shared priorities and clear direction. Citizens must play an active role in setting those priorities and achieving our common goals. Reducing crime and the fear of crime is no longer just the business of the police. Public safety is now everyone's responsibility.

The Metropolitan Police Department's new policing strategy—*Policing for Prevention*—recognizes that the police alone can't drive crime out of the District. Policing for Prevention reminds us that a number of factors contribute to crime and fear of crime:

- ❑ Physical conditions, such as abandoned buildings and broken streetlights.
- ❑ Economic conditions, such as the employment status of residents and the types of businesses that operate in the community.
- ❑ Social conditions, such as school drop-out rates, teen pregnancy, the level of drug and alcohol abuse in the community, and the availability and quality of after-school programs for youth.

In our open-air drug markets, for example, the police must deter the drug dealing or remove the



Mayor Anthony A. Williams and some little Washingtonians.

drug dealers through law enforcement and investigations. But we also have to change conditions in the neighborhood so the dealers won't come back. That means we have to get rid of graffiti and abandoned cars. We have to fix broken street lights. We have to secure abandoned buildings, rehabilitate them (or in some cases knock them down), and support new housing developments. We must also expand school-based programs, organize more athletic activities for youth, and create meaningful jobs as a way to offer real, long-term alternatives to the business of illegal drugs.

Policing for Prevention will succeed because it is both comprehensive *and* community-based. It links the resources of government with the energy, passions, and ideas of the community. Its emphasis on neighborhood partnerships means creating opportunities for the police, community

residents, and other agencies of government to roll up their sleeves and work together to revitalize our neighborhoods.

Make no mistake about it—the District of Columbia government is recommitting itself to crime control *and* crime prevention. And that commitment will be evident in every one of our government’s agencies and employees. I thank

and congratulate all of those who are making community policing a reality in our city: Chief of Police Charles H. Ramsey and his leadership team, our dedicated police officers and officials, other agency employees, and all community members who have stepped forward and embraced this effort.

The Making of the Safest Major City

By Chief Charles H. Ramsey

When you hear me say I want us to be the best police department in the country and the safest major city in America, I'm speaking what I believe is in the hearts and minds of *all* the members of the Metropolitan Police Department and the people who live and work in the District of Columbia. I also believe our desire to be the best and the safest comes not from competitive traits, but from ambitious virtues, and from our place of honor as stewards of the Nation's Capital City.

To reach these heights, every one of us has a job to do: Police Department members, sworn and civilian; residents and business owners; and other government agency workers at both the municipal and federal levels. My job is to provide the managerial leadership, develop and implement the policies, and influence others in order to obtain resources that will create an environment in the Police Department in which excellence can thrive—because excellence already exists in this organization.

A New Mission

As the Police Department's leader, it is also my job—in consultation with the Mayor—to define the agency's mission. Every agency needs a clear sense of its mission, because a mission is what defines its unique role in citywide government and in the community. Recently I introduced a new mission statement that reorients us to the core police function of *crime prevention*, and expresses the Department's desire to be a partner with others in improving the quality of life in the



Charles H. Ramsey, Chief of Police

District of Columbia. The new mission statement—

*To prevent crime and the fear of crime,
as we work with others
to build safe and healthy neighborhoods
throughout the District of Columbia—*

focuses on what really matters when it comes to public safety: creating a peaceful, prosperous place for people to live, work, and raise our children.

A New Policing Strategy

To make Washington, D.C., the safest major city in America, everyone must come together to solve our problems of crime and disorder using all the resources that are available to us. We could easily become overwhelmed by this task without a strategy to help guide us. A strategy helps us be

more focused and effective. It promotes greater collaboration. And it provides the vision, principles, tools, and methods for achieving our mission. With a clearly defined strategy, all partners can work in sync with one another and be held accountable for the work they are assigned to do.

*The safest major city is a place
in our imagination today.
Tomorrow, through Policing for
Prevention, it can become real, right
before our eyes.*

- Charles H. Ramsey, Chief of Police

I became Chief of Police of the District of Columbia in April of 1998. I saw then the potential for a community policing strategy to succeed in this city. But I believe our city is ready for more than traditional community policing. We are ready to take community policing to its next—and most logical—level.

Policing for Prevention is the new public safety strategy for the District of Columbia. It is founded on the basic building blocks of community policing—partnerships and problem solving. Problem solving is the process we work through to have a defining and lasting impact on crime and disorder. It means thinking before we act—creating plans and basing those plans on a sound understanding of the nature and extent of the problem. Partnership means identifying and mobilizing the resources in our neighborhoods and citywide to work together on a targeted problem.

While Policing for Prevention is rooted in the principles of community policing, it defines the limits of the police in preventing crime and shows us where others need to get involved. It expands

community policing to include *all* the activities and resources of the Police Department, and all the activities and resources of the community, other government agencies, and private and non-profit groups in the District of Columbia.

Policing for Prevention works in three basic ways:

- ❑ Policing for Prevention intervenes early and effectively in crime problems through more focused and proactive law enforcement.
- ❑ It helps to stabilize communities through neighborhood-based partnerships and problem-solving strategies.
- ❑ And it promotes long-term prevention and neighborhood revitalization by addressing the underlying causes and conditions that lead to crime.

When we use all three approaches—focused law enforcement, neighborhood partnerships, and systemic prevention—we will make the most vigorous attack against crime and the conditions that breed crime this city has ever seen.

Building on Lessons Learned

One of the major strengths of the Policing for Prevention strategy is that it builds on nearly a quarter century of experience and research in community- and problem-oriented policing in cities throughout the United States and right here in the District of Columbia. The lessons that have been learned include:

- ❑ *Public safety is not exclusively the responsibility of the police.* A variety of factors contribute to crime and fear of crime, and many of them are outside the scope of policing. Public safety strategies need to be linked with strategies to address social, health, education, and economic issues. Only then can cities build com-

prehensive problem-solving approaches for revitalizing neighborhoods. Experience shows that revitalization efforts involving a single response—for example, housing restoration, or cleanliness initiatives, or police enforcement—could be more effective when integrated with other strategies.¹ Policing for Prevention broadens the responsibility for public safety and establishes a framework for action that calls for the involvement of the community, other agencies, and private and non-profit resources in creating safe and healthy neighborhoods.

- ❑ *The more focused the police strategy, the more likely it is to prevent crime.*² Research and case studies show that tough but fair enforcement, driven by good analysis, is effective at reducing and preventing crime. Successful tactics include directed patrols at hot spots of crime, proactive arrests of serious repeat offenders, traffic enforcement patrols against illegally carried handguns, and other tactics that focus on “high risk factors” for crime. Even opening up lines of communication with an identified group of offenders and serving up the threat of sanctions appears to be a powerful deterrent.³ Policing for Prevention’s focused law enforcement approach encourages the use of these types of strategies in conjunction with our regulatory agency and criminal justice partners—prosecutorial, parole, and probation. Reducing violence and restoring order in the

short term become part of a comprehensive plan for preventing these problems over the long term.

- ❑ *The community has a legitimate and beneficial role in helping to set police priorities and taking direct action in problem solving.* Evaluations of community policing indicate that simply meeting regularly with the community does not reduce crime.⁴ The potential for crime reduction increases when citizens are involved with the police in deciding what problems are most urgent and troublesome. Residents must provide guidance to the government by formulating and conveying their community vision. The community must also take responsibility for marshaling neighborhood resources to do their part in achieving



Gene Solon, a community representative of a local community safety task force, provides input at a problem-solving group meeting in PSA 110.

¹ David M. Kennedy, “Neighborhood Revitalization: Lessons from Savannah and Baltimore,” *National Institute of Justice Journal* (August 1996).

² Lawrence W. Sherman and others, “Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn’t, What’s Promising,” *National Institute of Justice Research in Brief* (July 1998).

³ David M. Kennedy, “Pulling Levels: Getting Deterrence Right,” *National Institute of Justice Journal* (July 1998.)

⁴ Sherman.

that vision. The neighborhood partnerships approach of Policing for Prevention calls for police to meet with residents in each Police Service Area (PSA) on a monthly basis—at minimum—to refine the community’s vision, determine priorities, and work through the problem-solving model together.

- ❑ *Crime and violence must no longer be treated as simply a criminal justice issue. Prevention requires a much broader approach.* Providing support for at-risk women and mothers of toddlers, and enriching preschool programs with direct assistance to parents, are programs that have helped reduce the potential for future crime and violence as well as related problem behavior in children.⁵ Drug treatment and prevention have been shown to be cost-effective methods for reducing drug problems in various research studies, including one on cocaine use conducted by RAND in 1994.⁶ At the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, all forms of violence—firearm, youth, intimate partner, and workplace violence, for example—are seen as public health issues, and resources are devoted to research, program evaluation, and dissemination of information to help prevent these problems. Through its systemic prevention approach, Policing for Prevention makes the police advocates for programs and services that address the risk factors for crime and delinquency.

⁵ Marcia Chaiken and David Huizinga, “Early Prevention of and Intervention for Delinquency and Related Problem Behavior,” in *Critical Criminal Justice Issues: Task Force Reports From the American Society of Criminology* (National Institute of Justice, 1996)

⁶ DrugStrategies, “Facing Facts: Drugs and the Future of Washington, D.C.” 1999.

When appropriate, the police also take an active role in systemic prevention programs, coordinating with health and human service providers, the community, and private and nonprofit entities.

More Than a Patrol Strategy

In the Metropolitan Police Department, as in other police departments nationwide, efforts to implement community policing have focused on the patrol function. Few police departments, if any, have fully integrated the investigative and specialized functions into their strategy. I see these functions as critical to the success of Policing for Prevention.

Under Policing for Prevention, detectives, focused mission teams, and Special Services personnel must focus their time on cases and problems that concern the community the most and cause the most harm. Also, more strategic case management and assignment can maximize the Department’s potential for solving and preventing crime. For example, under true community policing, detectives receive and review information about a case and determine what method of follow-up is required based on knowledge of priorities and patterns. Detectives can also enhance crime prevention strategies by analyzing cases to identify factors associated with the risk of being victimized.

In Special Services, the major narcotics, intelligence, auto theft, environmental crimes, and similar units have the dual requirements to investigate and uncover citywide and sometimes regional patterns of criminal activity, while being attentive to and supportive of local police and neighborhood problem-solving efforts. Partner-

ships at the PSA level are as important to Special Services personnel as partnerships with federal agencies and other jurisdictions.

Policing for Prevention also guides the work of Corporate Support and other support units. Everything these units do must support the work of patrol and other operational units.



Police officers from the Third District use bike patrols to establish a presence in neighborhood hot spots.

Unity of Purpose

All elements of the Metropolitan Police Department will carry out the Policing for Prevention strategy. District patrol, investigative, station, and administrative personnel, as well as all centralized functions—Specialized Services, Corporate Support, and elements in my office—are expected to contribute to achieving our mission. For example, information technology, crime analysis, operational procedures, and training will be designed to drive the strategy. Corporate Support elements such as Information Technology, Human Services, and Business Services will adopt a customer-service orientation toward the members of the other units in the Department. Everyone will use problem solving and partnerships to improve the quality and effectiveness of their day-to-day work.

All activities and tactical operations in the Department will be evaluated according to whether they contribute to achieving the goals of Policing for Prevention.

- ❑ A bike patrol simply for the sake of bike patrol is not acceptable. Bike patrol, foot patrol, and scout car patrol must now be directed by problem analysis and the priorities of the community. Visible patrol is effective at reducing citizens' fear.
- ❑ PSA community meetings must now be targeted toward collaboratively identifying and addressing crime and disorder problems.
- ❑ PSA team meetings will focus on developing and assessing the progress of PSA plans.
- ❑ City services will be requested to help solve targeted public safety problems.

When our activities and tactics do not measure up, managers will be held accountable for providing feedback to their subordinates and helping to develop new procedures and strategies.

Everyone's actions and focus will be on the single purpose of achieving our mission through Policing for Prevention. The first step to making that happen is to provide clear instruction for

members at all levels in the organization on how to develop and carry out Policing for Prevention plans. That is the purpose of this handbook.

The safest major city is a place in our imagination today. But tomorrow, through Policing for Prevention, it can become real, right before our eyes.

Introduction to Policing for Prevention

Policing for Prevention is not a one-size-fits-all strategy because every neighborhood has different needs and resources and every community may have a different vision for its neighborhood. And there are almost no rules to limit innovative answers to the problems of crime and fear of crime, except those in the U.S. Constitution, federal and local laws, and Department regulations. Policing for Prevention is a guide for creating any number of unique strategies—strategies to fit any situation and lead to lasting change.

The Policing for Prevention strategy encompasses three different but complementary approaches:

- ❑ **Focused Law Enforcement** – targeting individual, high-risk offenders and crime hot spots through the strategic assignment of police resources and partnership with federal law enforcement agencies such as the FBI, DEA, and ATF, regulatory agencies such as the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, and the ABC Board; and criminal justice partners such as the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Corporation Counsel, and Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency.
- ❑ **Neighborhood Partnerships** – working with residents, other city agencies, and other community stakeholders to address chronic crime and disorder problems that occur in specific neighborhoods.
- ❑ **Systemic Prevention** – working with other government services, other criminal justice agencies, health and human services, and the

private and nonprofit sectors to help individuals, families, and communities build a resistance to crime and violence. Interventions address the health, social, educational, and economic conditions of people and their environment.

Each approach is unique in its focus, its effects, the police activities it encompasses, and the level of involvement of the police, other agencies, and the community. These factors, shown in Table 1 on page 19, combine to give each approach a different role in the mission of preventing crime and fear of crime, and building safe and healthy neighborhoods.

Focused Law Enforcement

In Policing for Prevention, the visible presence of a police force carrying out focused law enforcement activities has the effect of disrupting chronic crime and disorder activity, building community trust and confidence in the police, and reducing fear—all of which opens up opportunities for the involvement of the community and other agencies in longer-range problem solving and prevention.

By focusing on arresting offenders—in particular, repeat, career criminals—and issuing citations for the violation of regulations, offenders are deterred from committing new crimes. The focused law enforcement approach also uses the threat of arrest, through an active and visible presence, to send the message that crime will not be tolerated at a particular location.

*Focused law enforcement is
about doing first things first:
focusing on repeat calls, career criminals,
and hot spots.*

— PSA lieutenant

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The police are the primary force in focused law enforcement. Key police activities are carried out with the aim of using police resources to reduce and prevent harm while keeping residents informed about planned enforcement efforts. By keeping the community informed, the police can gain acceptance and support for intensive law enforcement tactics. The goal of the work is to achieve meaningful results for the people the police serve.

While police involvement is primary in focused law enforcement, the community plays a critical role by providing police with information about what activities cause fear and harm in the community, and about specific crimes and suspects. Information provided by the community and other criminal justice agencies—including probation, parole and court services—allows police to intervene early and effectively in disrupting specific crime patterns or individual career criminals.

Neighborhood Partnerships

The effect of neighborhood partnerships is the community reclaiming their neighborhood and replacing the signs of distress and abandonment with signs of care, courage, and hope. Even in less distressed communities, neighborhood partnerships are key to addressing quality of life issues before they develop into more serious crime problems.

Neighborhood partnerships expands the focus of Policing for Prevention from what can be accomplished by law enforcement alone to what can be accomplished when police and residents and other government agencies work together to improve the physical and social conditions that allow chronic crime and disorder problems to take hold in a neighborhood.

To sustain improvements in a neighborhood, the level of involvement of the community must be primary. The community determines how they want their neighborhood to look and feel, and takes responsibility for helping to develop and carry out a plan of action including efforts such as citizen patrols, community clean-ups, and other activities to revitalize and maintain the neighborhood.

*The community must provide a moral
structure and have a lower tolerance for
unacceptable behavior in their
neighborhood. Police can support residents
and help them deal with their fear.*

— PSA lieutenant

The key police activities under neighborhood partnerships include becoming familiar with the residents and the resources in the community through “PSA integrity.” This means maintaining consistency in the assignment of personnel to a PSA and ensuring that assigned personnel answer calls for service and work on problems in that PSA. Another important activity is mobilizing community members, community resources, and other government services to actively participate in problem solving and community-building as equal partners.

Table 1. Comparison of the Three Policing for Prevention Approaches

	Focus	Effects	Key Police Activities	Police Role	Other Agency/ Private Sector Role	Community Role
Focused Law Enforcement	Repeat criminal offenders and regulation violators. Repeat criminal offenses. Communities in distress.	Disruption or termination of chronic crime activity, reduction of fear, and building of community confidence in the police.	Crime analysis, directed patrol, tactical, follow-up investigations, arrests, and partnership with other regulatory or law enforcement agencies.	Lead	Shared	Shared
Neighborhood Partnerships	Physical and social conditions that lead to chronic crime and disorder. Community building.	Active involvement of community and other government services leading to neighborhood stabilization.	PSA integrity, PSA meetings, problem solving, and partnership with other agencies and the community.	Shared	Shared	Shared
Systemic Prevention	Health, social, educational, and economic conditions of individuals, families, and communities.	Individuals, families, and communities build a resistance to crime and violence.	Sharing information with, working with, and being advocates for the governmental and non-governmental agencies that effectively serve people and communities.	Shared	Lead	Shared

Systemic Prevention

Systemic prevention will have the long-term effect of building safe and healthy neighborhoods with thriving businesses, strong families, and residents who feel safe in their homes and in public places. The focus of systemic prevention is on helping people and communities build a resistance to crime and violence. This means addressing the underlying causes—or “risk factors”—of crime and

violence. For example, risk factors could include drug abuse, lack of quality education and effective youth programs, availability of firearms, lack of access to family counseling, and high unemployment.

In systemic prevention, a high level of involvement is required from all government agencies—particularly those that address economic and community development, public safety, and health

and human services—as well as the private and non-profit sector. Systemic prevention requires that different agencies and different systems share information, develop cooperative relationships with clear lines of accountability, and coordi-

*I find it helpful to think about “focused”
systemic prevention. I call it
“thinking small in a big way.”*

– Captain

nate—sometimes even combine—their service delivery efforts.

The key police activity under systemic prevention is to work toward greater coordination among agencies and other service providers, and to advocate for increasing resources for prevention and intervention. The police also play a critical role in developing and carrying out prevention strategies in partnership with the community and other agencies at the neighborhood and citywide level.